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Southern Hospitality and Holy Week

I am so grateful for the true Southern hospitality that y'all have offered in my two months in the Southeast Conference. So many folks have offered meals and fellowship, invitations to be present with churches for Sunday worship, special events, and celebrations in the life of congregations around the Conference.

I continue to work at getting acquainted with people, places, and processes. Significant meetings in April included the PATHWAYS Advisory Council and the Board of Directors. I continue to be impressed and humbled by the dedicated, knowledgeable, faithful, and fun folks that make this Conference such a special place to be and such a lively ministry. I also attended the two Members in Discernment Committee meetings, and appreciated the opportunity to meet those who are in discernment about authorized ministry and seeking their vocational path with the help of the Committee members and their mentors and, of course, the Holy Spirit.



Other work during the month included working with the Nominating Committee and further planning with staff and Piedmont College for Annual Meeting. The Board of Directors approved the draft schedule and pricing for Annual Meeting at their April 26 meeting so registration packets should be out soon. I am very excited about the energy and possibilities of our time together. I hope that folks will make it a priority to join with each other to experience this special time in the life of Southeast Conference.

As I write this I am in the Hartfield Jackson Airport after finishing two days of meetings with the Southern Region Taskforce (the group of Southeast, South Central, Southern, and Florida Conference ministers and leaders) around common ministries and common interests as we look to see who we are as the UCC in the South. I am awaiting a flight to New York City to meet with representatives of the Pension Boards. The work of the Annuitant visitors in this Conference and emergency pastoral assistance out of our Christmas Fund offerings are both parts of the way that the Pension Boards are present with ministry in our midst. I am grateful for the Insurance Boards and agents' response to the bad weather last month and for Disaster Response Ministries who have already contacted the Conference to inquire about any churches affected by the storms over the last weekend in April. It is comforting and reassuring to know that others are surrounding our people and ministries with faithful care.

Lastly, I want to share the renewal of my own spirit and ministry as I joined with several communities during Holy Week. Palm Sunday was spent at Virginia Highlands UCC in Atlanta as 11 new members were welcomed into fellowship and a word was offered about a different understanding of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.



New members are taken in to Virginia Highland

I was honored and privileged to be a part of the noontime Good Friday Service in Talladega.



I then had the great joy of attending the First Congregational UCC Atlanta Holy Saturday Women's Prayer Breakfast centered around the theme of touch and healing. Rev. Henrietta Andrews, readers, and dancers provided powerful meditations around stories of Christ touching people and healing people.



Saturday night I was present with Praxis UCC Atlanta as they observed Saturday Holy Vigil and Kim

Johnson gave the sermon. Chris and Lean Lyman Waldron were in our prayers as they prepared to welcome new life into their home on Easter Sunday.



Aqueelah As-Salaam serving communion at Praxis' Easter Vigil

Easter morning was a special moment as I worshiped at the Atlanta Sunrise Service hosted by North Avenue Presbyterian and First Congregational. The service was a jazz service with Rev. Dr. David Andrews of First Congregational playing his saxophone and the Atlanta Jazz Choir performing with a joint choir from both churches and a wonderful message by Dr. Scott Weimer, senior pastor at North Avenue. It was truly inspiring to be in the midst of the city acknowledging the coming of the light and joining other Christians in celebrating the resurrection.

And on Easter Sunday I had the privilege of sharing the risen Christ with Decatur UCC who also welcomed new members to their fellowship.





New members taken in at Decatur UCC

We are blessed to be a blessing and I have been truly blessed by your ministry on behalf of the Risen Christ who calls us to share the good news with all the world!

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